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A General Evaluation over the New Primary Curriculum in Turkey

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Abstract

In this age, there have been rapid changes in every area. With the help of globalization, the changes in science and technology affect and cause economical, cultural, political and social changes in several countries. Those rapid changes in science and technology have not only deeply influenced the education systems but also evaluation of the curricula has been made essential. It is the educational curriculum that provides individuals with the desired behaviour and collects them systematically. In the process of evaluation and revising of educational curricula, the priority should be given to the goals and the changing needs of the society. Therefore, it is necessary to make changes in the curricula accordingly. While evaluating and revising the curricula, the emphasis should be established on both national and international traits. This automatically increases the quality of the education.

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The History of the Curricula in Turkey

The 1926 Primary Curriculum was the first curriculum that important changes had been made. This curriculum was a reform curriculum in terms of principles, methods, courses, subjects and content (Binbaşioğlu, 1999). The 1936 Primary Curriculum was considered as the developed version of the 1926 Primary Curriculum (Yıldırım, 2008). The specified educational and instructional principles of this curriculum made it quite significant (Yıldırım, 2008). The 1948 Primary Curriculum was the developed version of both 1926 and 1936 Primary Curricula (Arslan, 2000). Comparing to the others, this curriculum was considered better and more fruitful although its pedagogical faults (Arslan, 2000). The aims were catogaorised in a more detailed way in this curriculum. In the 1968 Primary Curriculum, it could be said that important changes were done. Because methods and techniques were put under a separate heading, it was a student centered curriculum and the guiding was adopted. This curriculum has been used up to the present by changing the curriculum of the different subjects separately (Arslan, 2000).

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Until 1980s although minor changes were done on the present curricula, they failed to meet the needs of both students and the society. This was mainly because of the teacher centered traditional education system. In those years the curriculum development studies gained significance. There were also certain studies on the curriculum development for its continuousness and standardization (Gözütok, F.D, 2003). The national Educational Ministry, in 1982 formed a new curriculum to be a model for all the future curricula that would be prepared and developed.

However, the old education curricula were not very influential on training the required qualified manpower. The international researches such as Pisa, Prills and Timss-R also supported this.

It is a must for the curricula to be dynamic, innovative as well as contemporary (Saraçoğlu and et.al., 2010). For this reason, the curricula evaluation studies should be dynamic, too. The curriculum evaluation, in general, consists of accepting sources based on the curriculum evaluation, decisions that would be changed or removed (Demirel, 2002:173). Whether a curriculum reached its aim or not is understood at the end of the evaluation (Küçükahmet, 1998: 19). In fact, curriculum evaluation helps increasing the quality of education. Considering the results of the evaluation, the necessary changes are done accordingly. Sometimes it may be necessary to change the whole curriculum.

The New 2005-2006 Primary Curriculum

While the 1968 curriculum was carried out with serious and scientific development studies, the curricula after 1980 were away from the total development. Development studies were carried out one by one for each subject (Çelenk et al., 2000; Başaran, 1996). These partial changes, however, were another handicap of the curricula after 1980. Since, these changes distorted the vertical and horizontal consistency and coherence of the basic curriculum with disconnected, disjointed additions and eliminations of the content (Durbaş, 2005; Yılmaz, 2005). All these gave a start for the preparations of a new primary curriculum which is named as 2005-2006 Primary Curriculum.

The new curriculum was developed and then piloted in 9 different cities and 120 different schools for the first in the 2004 and 2005 academic year. Despite of its deficiencies, the piloted curriculum was able to answer the needs of the society. After it was evaluated carefully, the new primary curriculum was implemented nationwide in 2005 and 2006 academic year.

The new primary curriculum was student oriented in design. Instead of employing behaviorist approach, cognitive and constructivist approaches are mainly adopted in this curriculum (MEB, 2005). In the constructivist approach, students have an active role in the education process. Students are taught how to reach the knowledge and how to question. In other words, they are not spoon-fed. In the curriculum, subjects and concepts are organized according to the spiraling principle. Besides, the cooperation with the families of the students has gained emphasis. Students are not assessed by the conventional approaches; instead continuous assessment technique is used during the whole education process. In the new curriculum, for all the subjects eight common skills are determined. They are: “critical thinking skill, creative thinking skill, communicative skill, searching-questioning skill and the skill of using Turkish correctly and effectively” (MEB, 2005). The interdisciplinary approach is adopted in the new curriculum which in a way eased learning in every subject. Lessons are supported with the usable knowledge and skills from the life we live in (MEB, 2005).

Turkish

One of the most important changes that were done in the first year of the primary education was for reading and writing lessons. In the new primary curriculum, “sound based sentence method” for reading and “cursive hand writing” for writing classes were made compulsory for commencing (MEB, 2005). “Reading time” was for the first time included in this new curriculum. Subjects related to Kemalism were discussed and dealt with under four main titles. In a way, whatever included and implemented in Turkish lessons were based on constructivist approach along with the approach of the theory of multiple intelligences.

Science

“Bringing up happy individuals” was the whole idea of the Science lessons in the new curriculum. It is also clearly

stated that constructivist approach was adopted and students are to learn by actively joining the lessons. The lessons should be pleasant as well as entertaining at the same time. While teaching the Science lesson, the necessary information for the Citizenship should be conveyed.

Social Studies

Social Studies lessons were dealt from different angles. As it was in other lessons, in Social Studies lessons were student based. According to Yaşar (2005), the main aim of the course was to educate students who are capable of using technology and who could cope with the contemporary world with the educational attainments that were gained throughout the Social Studies lessons. The evaluation of the course was done by using traditional techniques; however, it was heavily supported by the “process evaluation” that was highly emphasized by the constructivist approach (Yaşar, 2005).

Mathematics

“Every single child could learn mathematics” is the main principle of mathematics. The vision of the lesson is to educate students who could use mathematics in daily life, who could solve problems and who enjoy learning mathematics (MEB, 2005).

Science and Technology

The aim of the lesson is to educate students to be literate in science and technology. “Little knowledge is the core knowledge” is the main understanding of the lesson. It is also aimed to embrace students with scientific attitudes and values (MEB, 2005).

Discussion and Recommendations

With the increasing significance of the education recently, curriculum evaluation studies have gained rapidness both at academic level and within the body of Ministry of Education.

A good education system can only be done by implementing a suitable curriculum. The curricula that are developed with the aim of meeting the needs and expectations of both individuals and societies enable the education system to be more productive and efficient (Uzunboylu, H., Hürsen, Ç., 2012). The curriculum evaluation studies should be included into the educational process to be able to cope with the changing world conditions.

The curriculum evaluation studies are carried out in order to determine whether the curricula reach its targeted aims or not and to get feedback whether the curricula is sufficient or not and thus be able to offer recommendations regarding the insufficiencies and deficiencies of the output of the curricula (Yaşar, 1998). Principally, during the curricula evaluation process, generally with a reflective evaluation way the data are collected and then analyzed and evaluated. This is how a decision is taken whether the curricula are applicable or not (Özdemir, M.S., 2009). The new curriculum that was piloted in several schools in the 2004 and 2005 academic year followed this approach in general terms. After it was implemented for a year and the views of certain people were seriously taken into consideration, the new curriculum has started to be implemented in the whole country since 2005 and 2006 academic year.

However, one could conclude that the implementation of the new curriculum in the whole country in a short time without fulfilling the stages systematically that are in the curriculum evaluation process obviously contravenes the principles of curriculum evaluation.

Classrooms high in student number in the educational curricula that were implemented before did not create any problems for the teacher centered education system, nonetheless; it causes major problems in the new primary curriculum that is student centered in design. A student should have an active role in the classroom for the learning to be effective enough and there is no doubt that this could only be done in classrooms with low student number.

The efficiency of existing in service training activities ought to be increased. For the curriculum to be comprehended fully, teachers should be trained on their deficiencies in infrastructure and be trained on how to use technological

tools and equipment (Gelen, İ., Beyazıt, N., 2007). Not overcoming those shortcomings mentioned above will surely affect the functioning of the curriculum negatively.

For the new curriculum to be efficient teachers should be given guidance. Otherwise, teachers could not be competent enough to serve the purpose. It is also important to guarantee that teachers have no problem in perceiving the philosophy of the curriculum.

Schools should consist of sufficient and appropriate materials for the curriculum to be implemented effectively.

Since the evaluation methods are noticeably different in the implementation process of the new curriculum than the old curriculum, both the school administration and the students should have an entire understanding of the new process. Most of the teachers do not know how to implement and how to use the new assessment and evaluation process.

There is a need for the cooperation of the school, student, and family for the new curriculum to be implemented best. A teacher is the one who facilitates this cooperation. Families could only be influential by fully understanding the new curriculum. To do this, schools may arrange meetings to inform families about the new curriculum.

In the new curriculum, students are taught how to reach information and this is another thing which makes the new curriculum different from the old one. Teachers could experience problems at this point for they may not be knowledgeable enough to cope with the situation. Therefore teachers should be equipped with the necessary methods and techniques. In the old curriculum, nevertheless, it was the teacher who conveyed the information to the students and thus they had no problem in controlling the process.

In the old curriculum, lessons were based on a sole source whereas in the new one, life is used as a source. Instead of concentrating on a single book, students are provided with distinct sources and examples from the real life to reach the information. At this point, both teachers and students could have problems.

The exams ought to be designed appropriately. In other words, the philosophy of the new curriculum should go parallel with the exams. If not, not only students but also teachers will experience problems.

Method

This study which is metanalysis in design has the characteristic of survey model. The survey model aims to reflect the situation as it is (Karasar, 1994; Balcı, 2004). To do this, the relevant literature both in Turkish and in English was reviewed carefully. A number of related articles were read and their results as well as conclusions were taken into consideration to form a basis for our current study.

Conclusion

As it is clearly understood from what we have discussed above, the curricula evaluation studies are in a way endless process. Since, they have to answer the changes that take place continuously in economics, science, technology, politics and culture. Therefore, it is essential for countries to have an educational curriculum which is suitable for the needs of the country. This is how qualified people are raised.

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